

# Executive summary

The annual Washington State Employee Engagement Survey provides a reliable source of feedback from executive branch employees on job satisfaction and overall employee engagement. We had an opportunity to collect this information in 2021 as we continued to face challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic and our nation's shifting workforce dynamics.

Participation in the survey continues to be steady: 44,726 employees — 66% of the workforce — responded to the 2021 survey, compared to 67% in 2020. In addition, two higher education institutions participated in our employee engagement survey efforts this year.

This year, we asked supplemental questions related to how agencies are continuing to expand in-office presence for employees who were primarily teleworking. This was in addition to the 20 standard questions, which are asked on an annual basis, and a rotating question, which is unique each year. The supplemental questions in 2021 focused on satisfaction with the agency's response to the pandemic, efforts to sustain relationships in the pandemic, and overall communication related to the pandemic and the workplace. The survey also included voluntary demographic questions.

During the survey administration, employees continued to experience impacts of the pandemic. Most have continued to work remotely, which can impact the feeling of connection with their teams, while others have been providing critical on-site services. We recognize that employee satisfaction and engagement can be impacted both by what happens in and outside the workplace. Although COVID-19 continued to pose unique challenges in 2021, our workforce showed continued resilience in adapting to our work environment.

## What we found

### Our most significant successes

- 88% of respondents felt their supervisors treat them with dignity and respect.
- 84% of respondents indicated they know what is expected of them at work.
- 76% of respondents identified that they find meaning in their work.
- 76% of respondents said their supervisor gives helpful feedback.

### Areas to improve

- 61% of respondents indicated they would recommend their agency to others, an 8% drop from last year.
- 69% of respondents are satisfied with their job, 7% lower than last year.
- 53% of employees indicated they know how their agency measures success, a 6% drop from last year.
- 54% of employees said their agencies help them navigate change, a 6% drop from last year.

### Workplace reopening responses

- Approximately 70% of the respondents indicated that (in their current work environment) they are satisfied with the ability to develop and maintain relationships with co-workers.
- 54% of respondents felt their agencies listen to their needs for reopening the workplace.

- 57% of respondents said their agency clearly communicated the rationale behind decisions for reopening the workplace.
- 65% of respondents participate in one or more days of teleworking.
- 61% of employees said that they were satisfied overall with how their agency is responding to staff needs during the pandemic.

## Demographic Data

We collected demographic data for nearly all state agencies in the 2021 State Employee Engagement survey. This data is important for agencies and the enterprise to ensure we gain insight about the entire workforce compared to the average of all employees. While demographic data is voluntary for respondents, it helps us understand the experience of all employees. We also work to build trust in sharing this voluntary information to improve employee experience and foster a work environment where all employees feel heard and included. Some key data points include:

- Nearly 10% of all survey respondents self-identified as having a disability (identical to the rate in 2020). In contrast, only 4% of state employees reported a disability in the Human Resource Management System (HRMS).
- 11% of respondents identified as a veteran. This is 4% higher than what is currently reported in HRMS for the total percentage of veterans in the workforce.
- 22% of respondents identified as a person of color. This percentage includes anyone in the survey who did not identify as white. This percentage aligns with what is currently reported in HRMS.

## Next steps

These survey results contain valuable information to better understand statewide and agency engagement levels. We strongly encourage agencies to supplement this information with employee “pulse surveys,” which can help agencies assess impacts as they return to the workplace and implement changes as a result of this survey.

For more information on the 2021 State Employee Engagement Survey, please visit the OFM State Human Resources [website](#).